

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace paragraph [0008] with the following amended paragraph:

[0008]           The type of time-out criteria that is determined by the second electronic device is not particularly limited. For example, commonly that the time-out criteria is simply a time period of inactivity over the physical link. Another, less common time-out criteria can be in a specially configured Network Address Translation device ~~that~~ located on the physical link that is configured to only time-out the connection if the NAT device requires the resources. Another time-out criteria that is somewhat more common is where there is a non-idle timeout. In this system the NAT device can choose to terminate any connection that is active for more than a predefined period. The second electronic device can be configured to determine which of these criteria (or any other criteria) is being employed along the physical link and respond with a delivery of keep-alive signals so as to reduce the likelihood of the connection being terminated.

Please replace paragraph [0015] with the following amended paragraph:

[0015]           Like existing NAT gateways, gateway 50 is thus also configured to automatically terminate idle connections between client 34 and Internet 54 in order to free-up resources for NAT gateway 50. Client 34 is configured to maintain a connection between client 34 and web-server 62 notwithstanding the automatic termination feature of gateway 50. More particularly, client 34 is configured to send keep-alive packets during an idle communication period to web-server 50 according to a variable criteria, such keep-alive packets being intended to prevent gateway 50 from dropping the connection between client 34 and web-server 50, but without changing the state of data in client 34 or web-server 62. Such keep-alive packets can be any suitable packet that achieves this result, such as a "no-op" command, a command that generates a non critical error result in the server or a command designed into the application level protocol as a keep alive mechanism. In a present embodiment, the variable criteria is based on an a time period that is arrived upon iteratively. The iterations are considered complete when a time period is established that is substantially close to the maximum amount of time that NAT gateway 50 will allow to lapse before terminating the

connection between client 34 and web-server 50. Further understanding about client 34 and this criteria will be provided below.

Please replace paragraph [0019] with the following amended paragraph:

[0019] Next, at step 420, a connection is established. Continuing with the present example, it will be assumed that client 34 opens a connection with web-server 62. This example is represented in Figure 3, wherein a connection is represented by a dotted line indicated generally at 100. The connection is opened in the usual manner, such as by having a web-browser on client 34 open an HTTP web-page that is located on web-server 34. The establishment of connection 100 thus involves having NAT gateway 50 create a mapping of client 34's private IP address to gateway 50's own public IP address. This is represented in Figure [[4]] 3 by having gateway 50 represent to web-server 62 that the public IP address of client 34 is "50.0.0.1/8", wherein "50.0.0.1" is gateway 50's own public IP address, while "/8" represents the individual port on gateway 50 that is mapped to client 34's private IP address of "10.0.0.2". Thus, traffic carried over connection 100 will be passed through gateway 50 using this mapping. Once connection 100 is opened, network traffic is sent thereover in the usual manner. In general, it is to be reemphasized that this is merely an example and the way in which a connection is established is not particularly limited.

Please replace paragraph [0023] with the following amended paragraph:

[0023] However, if at step 451 it is determined that there has been no prior termination of the connection, then the method advances to step 453 and an adjustment is made to increase the time between delivery of the keep-alive signals. Thus, in the example being discussed herein in relation to connection 100, it will be determined at step 451 that the connection has never been terminated, and the method will advance from step 451 to step ~~452~~ 453. At step 453, the criteria will be adjusted to increase the amount of time between delivery of keep-alive signals. The amount and/or rate by which the increase is made at step 453 is not particularly limited. In accordance with the present example, it will be assumed that the time interval will be increased by one-minute each time method 400

advances to step 453. Accordingly, during this cycle through method 400, the time period will be increased to six minutes from five minutes.

Please replace paragraph [0031] with the following amended paragraph:

[0031] Back at step 430, at which point the keep-alive signals are thus sent according to the criteria preserved at step 452. Since the criteria that was established at step 452 is a period of fifteen minutes, then at step 430 keep-alive signals will be sent from client 34 to web-server 62 every fifteen minutes. Since these keep-alive signals pass through gateway 50, then gateway 50 will only perceive that connection 104 is idle for fifteen minute periods, within the accepted fifteen minute timeout period that gateway 50 will await before terminating connection ~~100~~ 104. Thus gateway 50 will not terminate connection 104 and thus connection 104 will be persistent. Method 400 will thus continue cycle as long as needed to maintain a connection between client 34 and web-server 62 during idle period.